



Schoodic Planning Update

Background

Acadia National Park includes 2,366 acres on Schoodic Peninsula, which is the only portion of the park located on the mainland. The National Park Service (NPS) acquired the property at Schoodic in 1929 as a donation from the Hancock County Trustees of Public Reservations. The Schoodic District offers exceptional views of the rocky coast and surrounding islands in an uncrowded environment, and attracts approximately 250,000 park visitors a year.

In 1935, the U.S. Navy moved its radio station from Mount Desert Island to Schoodic Point so that the NPS could extend the Park Loop Road around Otter Cliffs. The NPS initially transferred 26 acres at Schoodic Point to the U.S. Navy, but, in 1947, Congress authorized the transfer of additional park land to allow for the expansion of the base during the Cold War. The U.S. Navy closed the base after 67 years of service and returned the land to the NPS on July 1, 2002.

The former navy base contains 36 major buildings

totaling approximately 212,000 square feet, including a dormitory, apartment complex, cafeteria, medical clinic, fire station, commissary, gymnasium, day care center, maintenance facility, recreational facilities, warehouse, and related utility systems. The original apartment building (Rockefeller Building) and generator house are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Schoodic District is zoned “natural area” in Acadia’s 1992 General Management Plan. The NPS manages visitor use at Schoodic to retain current use levels and opportunities for low-density recreation. The Schoodic District contains two “Rare Natural Communities” (Jack Pine Woodland and Maritime Shrubland), several rare plant species, and significant habitat for seabirds, shorebirds, waterfowl, and bald eagles, as identified by the Maine Natural Areas Program. Most of the Schoodic District is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places because of its historically significant cultural landscape.

Planning Alternatives

In response to the transfer of the navy base, the NPS is preparing an amendment to the park’s General Management Plan to provide direction for visitor use and resource protection of the entire Schoodic District over the next 10-15 years. An environmental impact statement will accompany the General Management Plan amendment. To support the plan, the NPS has prepared a cultural landscape inventory, transportation feasibility study, collections management plan, and visitor use study for Schoodic.

Reuse of the former navy base will be consistent with the laws and management policies that govern the use of national parks. In addition to a “No Action” alternative, which is required by the National Environmental Policy Act, the NPS is proposing the following two action alternatives:

The *National Park Service Management Alternative* emphasizes the park’s use of the former navy base for managing the Schoodic District, providing interpretive services to visitors, facilitating park research, offering resident environmental education programs, and housing staff.

The *Collaborative Management Alternative* emphasizes the use of the former navy base as an education and research center by multiple partners, in addition to satisfying the park’s operational needs.

Both alternatives include establishing the Schoodic Education and Research Center (SERC). Under the *National Park Service Management Alternative*, SERC would expand and improve the park’s ongoing educational and research activities. Under the *Collaborative Management Alternative*, SERC would also provide opportunities for collaboration among a variety of partners and complement the growing momentum in biological science and genetics research that is underway in Downeast Maine.

The purpose of SERC would be to promote and facilitate education and research that is consistent with the mission of the NPS. SERC would offer classrooms, laboratories, offices, and lodging to educators, researchers, and students of all ages. SERC’s programs and activities would not degrade the purposes and values for which Acadia National Park was established.

Establishing the Schoodic Education and Research Center under the Collaborative Management Alternative

Because of its added complexity, a more detailed description of the *Collaborative Management Alternative* is provided below. Under this alternative, the Schoodic Education and Research Center (SERC) would facilitate education and research to promote the understanding, protection, and conservation of natural and cultural resources of the National Park System and related research at the regional, national, and international levels.

Nonprofit Organization: The NPS would create an independent nonprofit organization to develop and manage SERC. The nonprofit would serve as an umbrella organization to coordinate the use of the facilities by partners participating in educational and research activities. It would have sufficient autonomy to be creative and flexible in developing and managing SERC while fully protecting the interests of NPS.

The nonprofit would operate SERC under a cooperative agreement or long-term lease with the NPS, which would include the assignment of real property for its direct use and for reassignment to tenant partners. The NPS would provide overall protection and security for the site, and help maintain facilities, grounds, roads, utility systems, and other infrastructure. The nonprofit and NPS would share responsibilities for site renovation and construction to facilitate the efficient reuse of the site. The nonprofit would also solicit partners, determine the viability of qualified candidates, and identify the most appropriate partners for inclusion in SERC.

Partners: SERC would consist of partnerships among independent organizations and government agencies that would collaborate on research and education consistent with its purpose. Programs and activities could include biological and physical sciences, environmental monitoring, resource protection, visitor use management, archeology, historic preservation, and the visual arts relating to the environs of Acadia.

Research by SERC partners could focus on such areas as predictive modeling and assessment of ecosystems, effects of environmental change on the genetics of populations, environmental sensing and analysis, and environmental informatics (i.e.,

developing new ways to gather, analyze, and use environmental information).

Partners would provide opportunities for the public to learn about their respective research activities through a range of programs and media, such as publications, web sites, and on-site classes, tours, and demonstrations. They would be responsible for funding their respective programs and operations. Partners would also be expected to contribute financially to SERC, which may include paying fair market value rent and covering the cost of utilities. Partners would not conduct manufacturing or industrial activities at SERC.

Buildings and Infrastructure: A critical step toward establishing SERC is to renovate buildings and infrastructure for use by partners (including the NPS) and make overall improvements to the landscape of the site. The NPS and partners would improve buildings for laboratory, meeting, classroom, office, and residential use.

The commissary, medical clinic, dormitory, and original apartment building offer the greatest potential for accommodating education and research use at Schoodic Point. The NPS has identified these buildings as the top priorities for renovation and reuse.

The commissary would provide large, flexible meeting space for up to approximately 100 people, with state-of-the-art video conferencing and high-speed Internet access and computer networking. The medical clinic would provide short and long-term laboratory and office space for researchers. The dormitory would serve as the primary short-term residential facility for as many as 125 people. The original apartment building would have space for visitor orientation, exhibits, and partner offices.

Other buildings that require renovation include the chapel, day care center, and bowling alley. The specific reuse of these buildings will depend on the needs of partners. In cooperation with partners, the NPS would make other improvements to enhance the qualities of the site, ensure public safety, provide universal accessibility, improve circulation, and create a more campus-like atmosphere.

Additional Information

The NPS is preparing a Draft General Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement for the Schoodic District, which will be available for public review and comment in the fall of 2003. For more information, please visit our web site at www.nps.gov/acad/schoodic/intro.htm or contact:

John T. Kelly, Park Planner
Acadia National Park
P.O. Box 177
Bar Harbor, Maine 04609
207-288-8703 (phone)
207-288-8709 (fax)
john_t_kelly@nps.gov